

GOLF

BY

C.J.L. GILSON



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C. J. L. GILSON



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CHAPTER I

THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GAME

It has been said of golf that it is not a game, but a disease ; and if it is a game, it is a selfish and egotistical game. In these observations there may be a certain amount of truth ; but, like all sweeping assertions, they will not stand the test of a thorough investigation.

The argument against golf, as lacking the " team spirit," falls through at once when we consider foursomes—one of the best forms of the game. Indeed, it is a pity foursomes are not played more often in the majority of clubs ; for in no other game does the " team spirit " happen to be more essential. Ideal partners in a golf foursome require something more than mere co-ordination in the matter of their play. They should be temperamentally akin ; each should have forbearance, patience, forethought. Any form of selfishness—said to be so conspicuous in a single—must prove fatal in a foursome. The player who endeavours to shine individually is certain to let his partner down. The game cannot be won, unless both players work together and both are more or less on their game. One player can do a lot to save the situation, but he cannot altogether carry his partner. And as the odds are that one or other *will* be off his game, consequent defeat is apt to call forth reproach.

Reproaches are as futile, as unsportsmanlike, on

a golf course as they are in life. One serious blunder will often make all the difference to the whole game. Golf is not unique in that, by any means ; but it is so individualistic a game, in which a man's character counts almost as much as his skill, that golfers are, indeed, very apt to blame their partners when the combination fails.

It is the individualism of golf that is at the bottom of all the " ifs " that we hear in the club house. In no other game is the player so apt to excuse himself.

WHY GOLF IS FASCINATING

Now, there must be a reason for this ; and that reason can be explained by the fascination of the game itself—an enthusiasm so great that it has been likened to a disease. To derive any degree of satisfaction from hitting a stationary ball in a given direction must seem to the uninitiated to be puerile—until the uninitiated attempts to do it himself.

For in this game there is a great deal more than to be able to play it correctly. As we said, a man plays it with his character. From the first tee to the last green that man's personality competes. No one is in active opposition against him. The ball is of the make he prefers. He can strike it in what manner he likes, when he likes, and with which club he thinks most suitable. If he makes a good shot, the credit is due to himself ; if he makes a bad shot, the fault is his, and his only, and he can blame no one else.

Of all human attributes that which probably plays

THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GAME 7

the most important part in the lives of us all is the faculty of Hope. No man can live his life, especially in these strenuous days, without repeatedly finding himself—so to speak—in a bunker or stymied, without occasionally striking a run of bad luck. If we keep on striving, we do so because Providence has made us all more or less sanguine.

It is the same thing in the Royal and Ancient Game. A player may miss his first drive; but Hope does not desert him. He hopes to make up for his initial delinquency by an exceptionally brilliant second shot. That fails him, too; and he loses the hole; but he forthwith starts a new hope on the second tee. He is going to win that hole, to make up for the first. And so on throughout the round; and for that very reason it is always the player with the strongest heart who is the hardest man to beat, the man who sticks to his hope.

THE MASTERY OF MIND

In no other game is the mastery of mind over matter more evident. Golf demands the utmost mental concentration and is to a large degree a test of nerves. In that lies the secret of its popularity. Every player realises that he is up against himself. In nearly every match that is lost, the player—whatever he may have to say about it—inwardly realises that he was beaten by himself. Most of us can accept defeat at the hands of a better man. There is nothing in it: the fellow had physical advantages or greater experience, and we went down,

trying our best against odds. But no man is going to sit down by his own fireside after a game of golf, and confess that he is a poor-spirited, knock-kneed individual without self-control, common-sense or presence of mind.

There it is that egotism comes into this business of golf. We are all naturally vain. We all hope that, if we try hard enough, we can eventually master the weak points in our character. Hence it is that on the links a man can attain as much moral good as physical benefit. A golfer is not a golfer merely because he owns a set of clubs and a handicap. He must know the game; and he must know himself, as well as any man can know himself. And what he can learn of himself he can learn on the golf course better than anywhere else.

CHAPTER II

THE GOLF SWING; STYLE; TEMPERAMENT

EVERY game that is worth playing is worth playing well. A great many golfers, beginning incorrectly, and after a time meeting with moderate success, continue with their incorrect methods; because they find that, when they try to adopt a more orthodox style, they play worse than before.

This is obviously wrong. Such people, though they may derive considerable enjoyment from the pastime, can never become really good players. The proper way to learn golf is to begin in the right

way. We teach a child to write in a copy book ; and we teach him stereotyped, copper-plate handwriting. Afterwards he develops a handwriting of his own in keeping with his character ; and no two men write exactly alike.

It is the same with golf. There is what may be called a stereotyped, copper-plate method of striking the golf ball which should be learned in practice and understood in theory at the very outset of one's golfing career. Upon that foundation every man of his own accord will build his own style ; and styles in golf are as varied as caligraphy, because it is a game in which individuality plays so important a part.

THE ONE WAY TO LEARN

There is obviously only one way to learn golf—the most difficult of all games—and that is the same way in which we learn the piano or Greek. We go to a qualified and experienced teacher ; and if the would-be golfer belongs to a golf club, he will always find a competent, professional teacher ready to take him in hand.

However, the professional, no matter how capable a tutor he may be, will not alone be able to make a golfer. The beginner must work at it himself ; and even after he has become a scratch player, he must continue to work at it ; for golf is a game that is never wholly learned.

There are innumerable text-books on the subject. The majority of the leading professionals and many

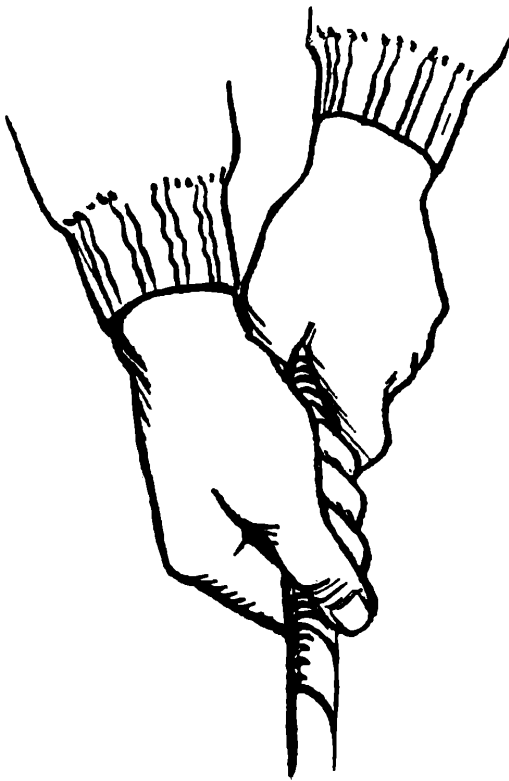
prominent amateurs have all written on the game ; and nearly all these books contain the usual elementary instructions. Though it must be obvious that no game can be learned solely by reading, it is equally certain that the conscientious study of an elementary handbook by a leading authority will be of the greatest assistance to the beginner.

His club professional will teach him, during his first lesson, how to grip the club, the correct stance, and how to address the ball. If the tyro is in earnest, he will turn to his handbook before his next lesson, in order that he may profit by what he has learned and impress it on his memory.

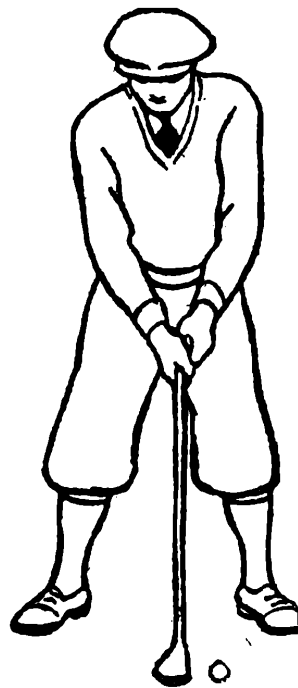
GRIP AND STANCE

Grip and stance, the two most elementary points in the game, the two subjects of the very first lesson given by every professional, are often responsible for a bad patch in the career of even an expert. Every low handicap player occasionally goes off his game. Though there is an orthodox, what we have called copper-plate, grip—whether one overlaps with the little finger of the right hand or not—very few golfers hold the club in precisely the same manner, for the simple reason that everybody's hands, fingers and thumbs, are different. Golf is a game requiring such accuracy and delicacy of touch, when it is played well, that it is quite possible that the slightest alteration in the position of, let us say, the right thumb or the left foot will just make all the difference between good and bad play.

For this reason every golfer should make a careful mental note of both his grip and his stance when he is playing well. If he is engaged in a match, he must naturally not think about that on the tee. Self-consciousness, or any form of introspection, is fatal to success. But there is no reason why, after



CORRECT GRIP



THE STANCE

making a successful drive, he should not return to the position in which he addressed the ball, and observe the exact position of his feet.

When the beginner has learned how to hold his club and how to address the ball, his instructor will proceed to teach him the golf swing. The same principle applies in every stroke in the game from

the full drive to the putt, the difference being that, as the stroke becomes shorter and shorter, fewer muscles, joints and sinews are brought into action. For every stroke in the game of golf there must be the necessary amount of follow-through; there must be no swaying of the body, the head must remain steady, and the eyes fixed upon the ball.

THE GOLF SWING

It is generally admitted that the golf swing is something unique. A cricket ball, a polo ball, a racquet or lawn tennis ball, is each struck in a particular manner; but in every one of these cases the player's weight is used, together with his wrists and correct timing, to give impetus to the stroke. In that alone does the golf swing differ from any stroke in any other outdoor game; for no theorist has ever yet suggested that a golf ball may be hit with any degree of certainty and accuracy by means of hurling the weight of the body in the direction in which it is intended to send the ball.

As we know, however, theory and practice do not always go hand in hand. Slow motion pictures have illustrated the alarming fact that even champions do not do exactly what they tell us to do. With nearly every player the body actually does move to a slight, though to quite a definite, extent. Bobby Jones himself was astonished to observe in such photographs that he does not bring the club down towards the ball in precisely the same manner as he takes it up, though that is certainly one of the

fundamental principles of the game that every professional will teach ; namely, that the forward swing should be a repetition, in reverse, of the back swing.

For all that, the theory is sound, because it establishes an ideal to aim at. The fact that nobody is perfect according to the text books is immaterial. To lurch the body forward before the conclusion of the swing is a fault common to many golfers,



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THE SWING—COMMENCEMENT



THE SWING—FINISH

especially old cricketers ; and the experienced golfer usually knows when he does it, because he does not retain his balance. If you are off your balance at the finish of the stroke, you may be perfectly certain that your swing is wrong.

With even the best of players no two men swing a golf club precisely alike. There is many a successful golfer whose style is most unorthodox ; but the

fact remains that if a player, whatever his style, can produce the required results, he cannot be grossly violating any fundamental principle *at the actual moment of striking the ball.*

STYLE AND STYLES

There is certainly no other game in which there are so many varied styles, some of which are weird and amazing. One man will hit the ball as if he were chopping wood ; another, as if he were cracking a whip ; and we know a player whose methods have been compared to the operation of poking out a cat from behind a sideboard ! All the same, as we have said, such unorthodox players need not necessarily be bad golfers. They are often good golfers, and, in exceptional cases, very good golfers. If they are, what appears to be heresy is merely superficial, due to peculiar physical characteristics, such as a certain stiffness in the joints or abnormal strength of wrists. Style is mannerism ; and a man's manner is the man himself. The only part of the golf swing that really matters is that part of it that covers about twelve inches in a fraction of a second, when the face of the club head is brought into actual contact with the ball. At that psychological moment the most unorthodox player is correct, provided the result of the stroke is as satisfactory as can be. The hard and fast rules relating to the complete swing, from the address to the finish of the follow-through, are merely the

results of experience as to how best to achieve the desired result.

But we need not go to the ordinary player in search of idiosyncrasies. The great masters of the game are all shapes and sizes. Consider the physical differences between Compston, Ockenden, Gadd, Robson, Boomer, and Herd ! Vardon, Braid, and Taylor bear no more physical resemblance to one another than a spaniel, a wolf hound, and a bulldog. Harry Vardon supplies the man of average build with what has been called the copper-plate style, with a kind of flourish to it that is a perfect model of grace. The player who is tall, lean, and powerful has the great James Braid as an example of what can be done on the links ; whereas the thick-set, broad-chested man of no great height can learn much from watching J. H. Taylor, who, like Braid—though now in the veteran class—is still one of the Powers that Be.

There are, therefore, three ways, not only of learning the game, but of keeping in form : firstly, the local practitioner, in the person of the club professional ; secondly, to study, when opportunity occurs, the particular methods of one of the acknowledged masters of the game, who is more or less one's own weight and build ; and thirdly, the occasional perusal of one of the standard text books.

ALWAYS SOMETHING TO LEARN

Certain it is that a golfer must learn the game, and must continue to learn it throughout his career.

In the first place, the correct manner of striking a golf ball is not the natural way of doing so. It may be the manner likely to produce the best results, but that particular method would never occur to the uninitiated, who had never seen anybody hit a golf ball in his life. A cricketer, for instance, left to his own resources, would jump at the ball, as if he were hitting a half volley. If he did happen to hit it, he would send it out of sight; but the odds are about a hundred to one on his missing it altogether.

The golf swing, therefore, has to be acquired; and it is no easy matter for the majority of people to acquire it. The trouble is that even golfers who have reached a low handicap frequently seem to forget what they know as well as their own names. This applies, strangely enough, to the most simple, threadbare maxims, principles that have been drummed into every golfer's head again and again, since the day upon which he first took a club in his hands.

"Slow back"; "Keep your eye on the Ball": these are the golfer's *Vade mecum*, his two great commandments. And every golfer, whatever his handicap, breaks them—just as some golfers, *miserabile vulgus*, on occasions, break the Second Commandment of the Decalogue.

That is just where the game is a great school for self. One would think that any fool could go out upon the links with a fixed determination to do two or three perfectly simple things: to keep his head still, his eye on the ball; and not look up until

the ball is speeding well upon its way towards the pin. And yet, it is in these perfectly simple things that a man is brought face to face with his own fallibility and weakness. A critical moment, a feeling of over-anxiety, a sort of futile attempt to eclipse oneself, or carelessness due to too much confidence—and, lo and behold, disaster !

TEMPERAMENT

In nine cases out of ten, it is temperament ; and the necessary temperament can, also, be acquired. It may take far longer to acquire it than it does to achieve average skill at the game itself, for this is a department of the game in which the player is up against, not physical, but moral, disadvantages.

There is no panacea that will help a man to conquer himself. There is no panacea that will force him to continue to look at the ball he intends to hit, if he has contracted the habit of looking at the place where he wants to hit it—and doesn't. But even the most weak-minded among us has some determination ; and such a man can step upon the first tee on the day of a competition or a match that he means to win with a firm resolve to keep his head still throughout the whole game. As a golfer's memory is short, and as golfing flesh is weak, he will be well advised to carry this resolution with him as his caddy carries his clubs, and never to forget it for any stroke he is called upon to play, even the shortest putt.

Men of a naturally nervous temperament have a harder task in front of them than the more phlegmatic and matter-of-fact. That is not to say, however, that an imaginative man cannot be a fine player, though the highly imaginative seldom is. Such a man is more likely to have his brilliant days; and when things go wrong with him, they go very wrong, indeed. Not that the really great, consistently good golfer should be either thick-skinned or thick-headed. Far from it. Golf is a game for a man of spirit and intellect; but he must have sufficient control over himself not to let the excitement of the game get the better of him.

A very notable and brilliant golfer who was exceptionally highly-strung was the late John Graham, Junior. At his best Jack Graham was one of the finest amateur golfers that ever lived. We saw him win the St. George's Vase with a record score in 1914; and towards the close of that round, though he was playing both his mashie and iron shots to perfection, his fingers were seen to be trembling as he gripped the club. And yet, in the whole of that round he made but one mistake—and that was a topped drive at the ninth hole, from which he brilliantly recovered.

At the same time, it must be remembered that Graham never won a championship. He was physically incapable of standing the strain of that awful week. That is where iron nerves come in. Every good golfer can hit his drive, but all cannot always sleep after the stress and strain of battle.

A WORD OF ADVICE

To the player who is overburdened with an excess of imagination we can give this advice. There are occasions on a golf course where your temperament can prove of value. Sometimes it will be found to your advantage to visualise the stroke before you make it. Picture to yourself the finish you want ; picture the ball ending its flight in the exact spot where you want it to rest—if you are driving, straight down the middle of the fairway as far as you can see ; if it is an approach shot, somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the flag.

It is wonderful what this kind of psycho-analysis can do. But never, on any account, let your imagination carry you away in the opposite direction ; never consider for a moment the resultant disaster, if you top a shot or miss an easy putt. That is always fatal. Nemesis descends upon you with inevitable precision. That which you dread will most certainly occur. Nor is it wise ever to do the same thing in regard to the score, whether it be match or medal play. The player who wins in either form of the game is he who plays every individual shot without thought of what is passed or what is yet to come.

CHAPTER III

IRON SHOTS AND SPOON SHOTS

Vardon expresses the opinion that the two simplest strokes in the game of golf are a drive

from the tee with a brassie and a mid-iron shot from the fairway. This may be so; but the fact remains that certainly very few amateurs will play their iron shots in the same way as a professional. Indeed, in this department of the game the difference between amateur and professional golf is most apparent. There is often very little difference in the tee shots, so far as actual length is concerned, between the average professional and the amateur whose handicap is rated at scratch or better.

Very many amateurs, too, are exceedingly good putters; whilst several of the front rank professionals—George Duncan, for instance—often fail conspicuously on the greens, though by the excellence of their mashie play they give themselves little enough to do. On the other hand, one has to go a long way to find an amateur who can handle his iron clubs like a Duncan or a Mitchell, to name only two of many leading players.

PLAYING THE IRON SHOT

*It is true that C. J. H. Tolley, when on his game, is an exceedingly fine iron player; and so are a few other well-known amateurs. That does not alter the fact that the ordinary scratch player, who can otherwise play stroke for stroke with his club professional, is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to the execution of the shot with any kind of iron club up to the pin.

It is true he will often produce the necessary results as satisfactorily as the professional; but

he seldom strikes the ball in exactly the same way, with the same firm crispness and decision.

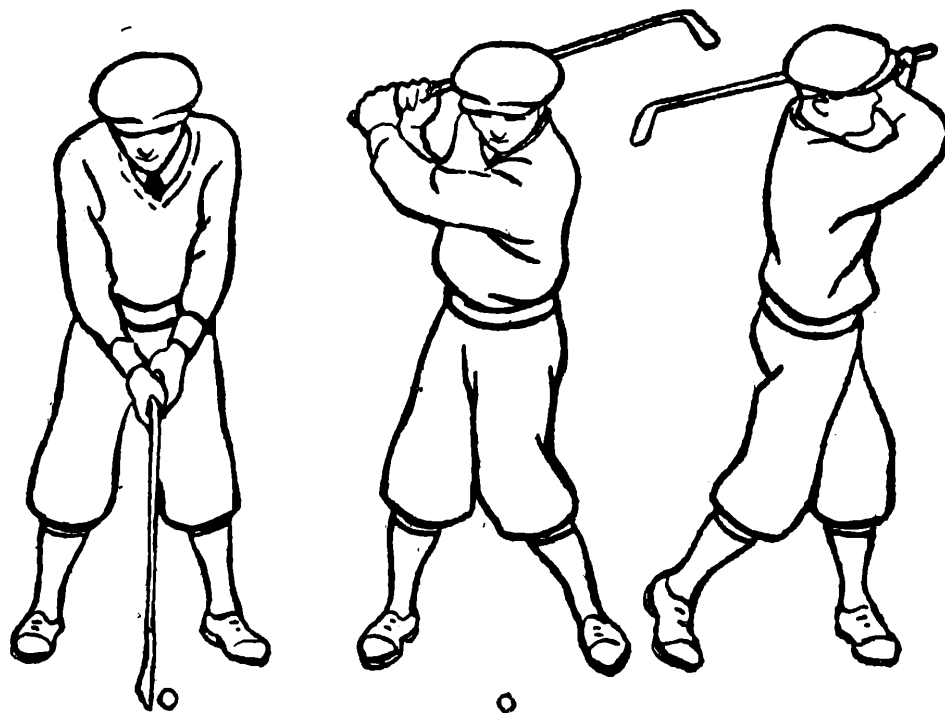
And when it comes to the ordinary player with a handicap—and that means the vast majority of golfers—the difference is far more marked. As a general rule, it may be taken for granted that the longer handicap a golfer has, the worse he is with his irons.

And yet, there are certain indifferent players who fancy themselves to such an extent with this particular club that they actually drive from the tee with it, knowing that with an iron they are more certain to hit the ball than with a driver, a brassie, or even a spoon. Now these golfers are not only faint-hearted, they are under a delusion. They are faint-hearted because they have obviously despaired of ever becoming good golfers; for, to be a good golfer, you must hit the ball a reasonable distance from the tee, and an iron club is neither designed nor intended to achieve that object.

A man who drives with an iron can never get below a certain generous handicap, however steady he may be. Also, such players are under a delusion, because they never by any chance use an iron as it ought to be used. They either “swing” it as if it were a driver, or else they propel the ball upon its journey by some peculiar method invented by themselves.

Now, though the principles of the golf swing may be precisely the same in the cases of a full drive and an iron shot—the swing being slightly modified

in the latter case—there is, or should be, a distinctive difference in the use of the two different kinds of club. Apart from the fact that the swing with any kind of iron should not be so full, and should be more under control, the stroke is more in the nature of a *hit* than that which is made with a driver from the tee or a brassie through the green.



IRON SHOT (1)

IRON SHOT (2)

IRON SHOT (3)

The circumstance that the iron shot does require *greater control*, that the golfer cannot “let himself go” at it in the same manner as in the drive, probably accounts for the fact that the professionals are better at it than the amateurs. And they have greater control of their clubs for the simple reason that they are always handling them, whether they

are actually playing or not. A golf club to a professional golfer is like a rifle to a soldier or a typewriter to a typist.

PRACTICE IS EVERYTHING

This brings us to one of the reasons why the weak point with the average amateur is his iron play. He does not practise enough. He is a comparative stranger to his clubs. And here a word of advice to him who is really keen and anxious to improve at the game. He ought to take his clubs home with him, keep them at home, look after them himself, and occasionally take them out and handle them—not necessarily swing them in his smoking-room and bring down the plaster from the ceiling, but address an imaginary ball with them, “waggle” them as he would when playing, and keep his wrists in training.

Let him, also, imagine that his golf clubs are human, and sensitive. They are old friends—or ought to be. And old friends do not like to be cold-shouldered and neglected for weeks at a time.

That anyhow is the proper way to look at it. To go to the other extreme, we once heard of a man who was so devoted to his putter that he used to take it to bed with him. You may regard him as a small boy with a favourite toy, or a lunatic; but, if the account we heard was true, this particular golfer was a terror on the greens.

One need not go quite so far as that; but to keep one's golf clubs at home and regard them with

a certain degree of affection, instead of accepting them from the hands of the caddy-master as undesirable aliens, is undoubtedly a sensible practice. A little wrist-work in the sanctity of our homes may prove to the detriment of the carpet, and the golf widow may not altogether approve, but one's game will certainly benefit.

Vardon's observation is a truth that must be modified. Once the golfer has obtained a certain amount of proficiency at the game, he will be tolerably certain of executing his iron shots indifferently, for—as he says—it is easy to hit the ball with this club, but it is difficult to use it to perfection. And another reason for that, as well as the question of “control,” is that iron play, so called, involves the use of several clubs. The exact number of these clubs depends upon the golfer's ability and equipment. The average good player may carry a cleek, and two or three irons, whilst there are also driving-irons, mashie-irons, jiggers and sammies and all sorts of fancy clubs. The long handicap player will be well advised not to over-burden himself with too many clubs; for it is far better for him to make himself as perfect as he can with those few with which he feels most at home.

CARRY TWO OR THREE IRONS

Now, in regard to this variety of iron clubs, take—as an experiment—three of different length and loft, and play the same shot over and over again with them. It will be found that the distances

that can be attained by each, if the stroke is properly executed, vary surprisingly little. There will not, for instance, be more than ten or fifteen yards between the lengths obtained by a light iron and a heavy one. It is obviously better for the player who does not have to live up to the reputation of a very low handicap to be on the green, though ten yards short of the pin, than to find himself bunkered or in the rough. Hence long handicap players would be more successful, if they aimed at comparative accuracy, instead of trying to emulate the expert.

No player, however, can do very much good at the game without carrying at least two or three irons. And it is because there is a distinct difference between each of these clubs, though that difference may be slight, that he invariably uses every one of them badly. The shorter the shot, the shorter the shaft; and the shorter the shaft, the nearer the player should stand to the ball; and the more upright, as a matter of course, becomes the swing.

The professional has learnt by constant practice, and by dint of long experience, to adapt himself naturally, so far as his stance and swing are concerned, to every club that he receives from the hands of his caddy. The amateur does not do this, when it comes to the use of his irons. And yet, he invariably takes far more trouble over these particular shots, in the way of settling down to his stance, than does the professional; and the reason for that is because he himself feels that he is not

altogether at home. We do not recommend any amateur to attempt to play through the green with the rapidity of a Duncan. Indeed, the more trouble he takes, the better shots he is the more likely to accomplish. Familiarity at golf does not breed contempt, but confidence ; and if the player has not got confidence, that is all the more reason why he should be careful.

At the same time, every golfer would gain more confidence with his irons, if he made a point of practising with them more often, making himself thoroughly familiar with the peculiarities of each particular club.

Confidence, of course, is an important factor in every department of the game ; and it becomes even more necessary as one gets nearer the green. The average golfer time and again fails to put the ball on the green, from distances varying from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and eighty yards, for the simple reason that he has no confidence about the shot ; and he is not sure of himself because he realises that he seldom if ever plays the stroke correctly.

USING THE SPOON

There is an old golfing saying, " Off with the iron, on with the spoon." That must be obviously true when the player is attempting to use both his iron and his spoon in precisely the same manner. As a matter of fact, there is a marked difference between the two strokes, as there should also be in the use of

them. Watch any first-class professional with these two clubs, and observation will show you that he uses them differently. This difference cannot better be described as the difference between a *swing* and a *hit*. The spoon either "sweeps" the ball off the fairway, or "stabs" it out of a bad lie in the rough; whereas the iron takes a neat divot from underneath the ball and "shoots" it on its way. These expressions are only metaphors which are meant to do nothing more than suggest what actually happens, to convey the right impression—for the distinction is not easy to describe.

The spoon and the iron are not, or should not be, interchangeable though even the greatest players have phases when, for the time being, they prefer one club to the other. Ideal spoon play is invaluable. With the wind from the right of the fairway, there is no club like it to hold a ball up against the wind, and bring it to rest, with little or no run on it, somewhere near the flag. The spoon shot, however, is merely a modification of a drive—except when it is used to get the player out of difficulties, when on occasions it can be of the greatest value. Indeed, there is a certain type of rough grass in which the use of any kind of iron as often as not results in cutting underneath the ball or hitting it off the socket. In such cases, the player has two alternatives, and two only: to get back on to the fairway with a niblick or attempt to recover with a spoon.

Whilst on this subject, one more reason why the

average player is worse with his irons than his wooden clubs. The club-heads in the latter case are heavier, and therefore with greater facility they lead the swing and follow-through. The player cannot "feel" the head of a light iron as easily as the more weighty head of a brassie or a driver. The result is, therefore, that the hands are apt to get in front of the club head at the moment of striking the ball. If a player is continually shoving his iron shots away to the right, he may be tolerably certain that this is what he is doing. It is just as essential for the club-head to lead and to come right 'through the ball' with an iron as it is with a driver.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPROACH SHOT; GOLF DISEASES; THE CHIP SHOT

IN the whole range of golf shots from the full drive to the short putt there is a hiatus, or gap, between the ordinary shot with a mid-iron and that with a mashie. The reason is that, at this stage of the game, the golf stroke becomes something different. It is no longer a question of force; and even greater accuracy than ever becomes necessary, because now the player should not only be dead straight, but he should also judge the distance to a nicety.

The objective with a mashie is to put the ball near enough to the hole to be able to go down in one

putt. That is an ideal that is not by any means always accomplished, even by the finest players in the world ; but one has only to see men like Harry Vardon and J. H. Taylor at their best, to realise what can be done with this particular club.

THE APPROACH SHOT

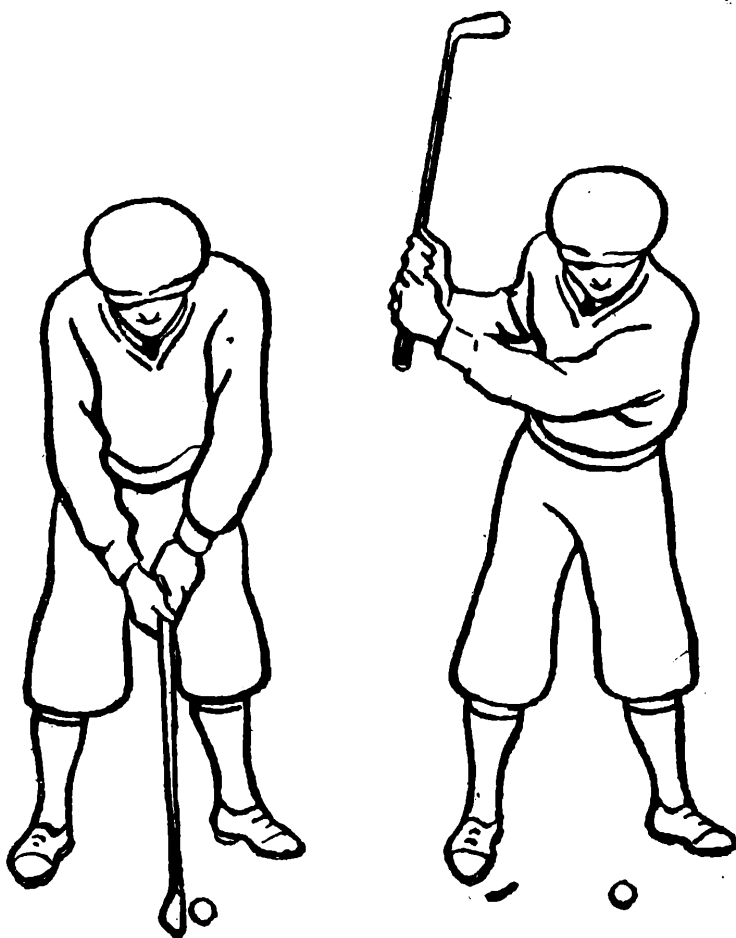
There are, of course, three methods of approaching the hole. The golfer can pitch ; he can pitch and run, or he can run up. But all these three shots have special characteristics that do not come into the game to the same extent with the longer and more powerful clubs.

Approach shots are, so to speak, more scientific than those strokes in which the main object of the player is to hit the ball a considerable distance. And they are more scientific inasmuch as they require greater delicacy in execution and more careful judgment in estimating distance, the strength of the wind, and the nature of the ground.

What we have called "control" comes into operation in the use of this club more than with any other. As the club is shorter than the iron, one naturally stands nearer to the ball, with the right foot well in front of the left and nearer the ball. A suitable stance for the ordinary mashie shot is for the clubhead and the right foot to be at right angles to the direction in which it is proposed to hit the ball.

Bad shots with a mashie—and, Heaven save the

mark, they are common enough—are usually to be accounted for by the fact that the player does not stand firmly on his feet. A great many players put much too much body movement into their mashie shots. Too much movement of the knees is often productive of the most disastrous results.



MASHIE SHOT (1)

MASHIE SHOT (2)

Firmness and balance are even more essential with a mashie than any other club ; and this applies to all three varieties of the approach shot. There can be no hard and fast rule as to which of these three methods is the best. A first-class player is

master of all three : he can pitch, pitch and run, or run up at will, as the occasion demands.

WHY THE PITCH SHOT

There is little doubt that the ordinary pitch and run is the easiest to perform. The player estimates the distance the ball will run after it has pitched ; and he pitches as near as he can to that particular spot—and the average golfer trusts more or less to luck that it will come to rest somewhere near where he wants it.

For that reason the pitch shot is unquestionably the most satisfactory ; for, if well played, it gives the player comparatively easy work on the greens ; and when there is a plateau green or a cross-bunker the golfer has no alternative. To execute the pitch shot, however, in the approved fashion of a master is beyond the ability of the average golfer. The “cut shot” with the mashie is one of the hardest strokes in the game ; and the long-handicap player is certainly advised not to attempt it. It requires more than ordinary skill to get that amount of spin on the ball that will make it bite the turf on the green, kick a few inches to the right, and stop stone dead.

When the golfer who has a handicap of double figures has no option but to play a pitch shot, he will be wise to use a mashie niblick, or a niblick. The excessive loft of these clubs will more or less achieve his purpose, if he is careful to keep his eye on the ball, to drive the sharp sole of the club

into the ground immediately underneath the ball, and to be sure that he finishes with his right arm straightened, as evidence that he has followed through. This is a comparatively easy shot that anyone can learn; and it has the desired effect of putting sufficient back spin on the ball to stop it more or less dead.

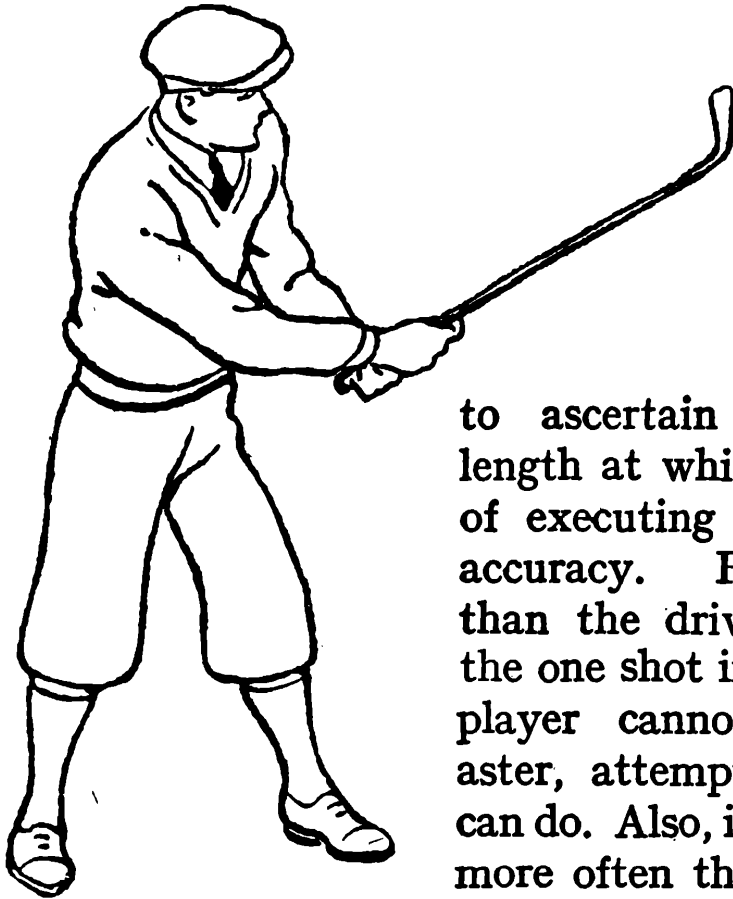
THE RUN-UP SHOT

The run-up shot is not so easy as it looks. There are occasions, however, when every golfer should use it. It is, for instance, an extremely valuable stroke in a gale; for a high wind will play ducks and drakes with the ordinary pitch and run, especially when the ground is more or less hard. And yet, there are an extraordinary number of quite low handicap players who have sadly neglected this particular phase in the art of golf, of which the old Scotch players were such masters.

They are advised to learn it, since there are certain occasions where it is invaluable. A fairly good player can pick it up, under the tuition of a competent professional, in the course of one lesson. The reason why so many players, even good players, dread the run up is because they have tried it, and they imagine that on occasions it has let them down.

The fault has invariably been their own. One of the greatest difficulties with the shot is to judge when to attempt it and when to leave it alone. It is never easy to estimate the exact distance when one is too far away from the pin to reach

one's destination by this method. The run-up should certainly not be attempted over a certain distance from the green; and that certain distance must vary according to the player's methods, strength and ability. Every golfer should practise the run-up shot, and when practising, should be careful



RUN-UP SHOT

to ascertain the maximum length at which he is capable of executing the stroke with accuracy. For, even more than the drive itself, this is the one shot in golf in which a player cannot, without disaster, attempt more than he can do. Also, it is a stroke that, more often than any other, is fozzled; and a fozzle at this stage of the game invariably

means the loss of a whole stroke. When the player's object was to place his ball near the pin, and the result of his operation is not even to land him on the green, he has some reason for dissatisfaction.

Approach shots of all kinds demand both steadiness and nerve. Never is it more necessary to keep one's eye on the ball and not to look up; and never is the tendency to do so greater. Every player can overcome this temptation by sheer will-power. The man who is going to win on the golf links is he who is determined to keep his head down for his mashie shots. Above all others, they are the strokes that count, as they are also the strokes that can be, on occasions, most calamitous.

GOLF DISEASES

The golfer is liable to many diseases: slicing, pulling, topping, schlafling or fluffing—that is cutting under the ball—and socketing. Of these the last is the worst. It is a fell disease, the very small-pox of golf. Moreover, nobody is immune; and no kind of inoculation has ever yet been invented. The professional who does so will make his fortune.

Even the best of golfers at times contract the complaint. It may be some consolation to the ordinary handicap player, who sees his card ruined or his match lost by a succession of shots that shoot off to cover-point from the socket of the club-head, to reflect that at one time even the great J. H. Taylor, as fine a mashie player as the world ever knew, had a bad attack of the complaint.

It may be said that the professional is the local practitioner, to whom the golfing patient goes for diagnosis. It so happens that this particular disease is far and away the hardest to diagnose of

any, for the simple reason that it may be contracted in at least two or three different ways. The common fault is probably that the left arm is not kept near enough to the body during the downward swing.

The player who has got into the habit of socketing—or “shanking,” as it is sometimes called—can experiment by putting a handkerchief under his left arm-pit ; and if he executes the stroke correctly, the handkerchief will remain where it has been placed throughout the execution of the shot. This is an old tip, and may on occasions prove valuable. However, another—and possibly just as common—cause of socketing is that the player is putting in too much work with his right knee, and that *before* the ball has been struck.

SOCKETING

A player can socket with any iron club, as he can also on occasions hit a wooden club shot off the heel ; but it is with the mashie that he is most liable to develop this complaint. Now, the follow-through of every mashie shot entails a slight inward bending of the right knee. That is necessary with the follow-through, because it ensures the club-head coming through the ball and finishing well out in front of the player—the correct way of playing the stroke. But, if the right knee bends before the ball is struck—that is to say, during the downward swing—this has the effect of throwing the body slightly forward, with the inevitable result that the ball is not hit truly with the face of the club, but

at that particular point where the continuation of the shaft meets the club-face. This being a concave surface, the ball goes off to the cricketer's cover-point, where there may be a bunker—and even if there is not, the player is to all practical purposes no nearer the hole than he was.

Though the left arm and the right knee may be the most common offenders, the crime can be committed for no better reasons than that the stance is wrong, the player is standing too near his ball, or because he is simply not looking at the ball. And above all else the disease, so to speak, is infectious: the golfer catches it from himself. Once he has done it, the result is so disastrous that he is terrified that he is going to do it again—indeed, he may even anticipate doing it. And to anticipate calamity, as we have pointed out, is always fatal. Confidence, so necessary in golf, goes by the board. The player who normally expects to put his ball somewhere near the hole now inwardly reminds himself of the alarming possibility that it may go off the face of his club at an angle of forty-five degrees from the line of play.

When a man has once socketed in the course of a round, his courage and self-confidence are truly put to the proof. It is easier said than done, but he must try to convince himself that he is not going to do it again. If he is an experienced golfer, he will probably know why he has done it; and when he is next called upon to execute that particular shot, he will be careful to pay special attention

to the offending limb—the upper joint of his left arm or his right knee, as the case may be.

THE CHIP SHOT

There is another stroke in this game of infinite variety that might appear to the uninitiated remarkably simple. It is played when the golfer is not actually on the green, but somewhere near the edge of it; and it goes by the name of the “chip shot.” It is certain that there are many players of low handicap, who can accomplish the stroke perfectly satisfactorily, but who go about it in the wrong way. Their object is to lay the ball stone dead, and they very often succeed in doing so. They are not ambitious enough: they should in every case attempt to *hole out*. Actually they will not often do so; but the fact remains that if they attempt to, if they have that object and determination, they will succeed more often than they do. And in any case, they will leave their ball near enough to the hole to go down in one putt; for, if they generally try to hole out, remembering the time-worn maxim “never up, never in,” they will give the hole a chance, and yet not go far beyond it—for we all know that a ball will not drop if it is struck too hard.

That word of advice applies to golfers who are neither first-class nor without some skill and experience at the game—the men who are handicapped, let us suppose, at about four or six, who are somewhat better than the average player. On

the other hand, there is the case of the long handicap player, who is rated at eighteen or twenty-four, with whom this particular shot is mainly responsible for the fact that he has such a handicap. Many such golfers hit their drives and their iron shots not altogether satisfactorily when judged by higher standards, but certainly in a manner that justifies them in possessing a lower handicap than they have. And then, they collapse hopelessly when they find themselves within thirty yards of the green. The players to whom we refer have not the remotest idea of how to put the ball anywhere near the flag.

They look up, and cut right under the ball, or they top it—in either case hitting it but a few inches. This is an error that everyone of these players could rectify with very little trouble and a certain amount of practice. Whether they play this particular shot with any sort of an iron, a jigger, a mashie, or even a mashie niblick, all they have to do is to stand in front of the ball, and to play the stroke exactly as if they were putting.

They are not necessarily bad putters. A great many long handicap players can putt very well; but, for some reason or other, they cannot play a stroke which is, in actual fact, nothing more or less than a glorified putt, for the first few yards of which the ball is lifted an inch or so from the ground by the loft of the club, to enable it to clear the coarser, longer grass of the fairway before it arrives on the green.

They do not look up for their putts. Nor do they stab or jerk at their putts with the rapidity of

a flash of lightning. And yet this is what they do when they are called upon to chip on to the green up to the hole.

TO PRACTISE THE SHOT

Let the player who wants to practise this shot take out six balls and put them down five or six yards from the edge of the green. Let us suppose that he elects to play the stroke with a mashie. He would be wise at first not to trouble about the hole itself. All he has to do is to imagine that his mashie is his putter, that he must hit the ball carefully and truly, and follow-through, addressing the ball with his hands, somewhat in front.

The loft of the club will, on its own accord, lift the ball enough for his purpose. It will pitch somewhere near the edge of the green and run on. At first, it will probably run much too far; but once he has got into the shot, he will have ascertained the fact that he can accomplish it correctly, and he can then, having gained the necessary confidence, begin to regulate the strength. Bad golfers so often fail in this respect, because, when they cannot execute the stroke in the right manner, they are attempting to emulate the expert, and lay the ball stone dead. That will come later—but not without practice.

In regard to this stroke, when it is attempted from any distance from the green, and when it is required to put a good deal of run on the ball, nearly all the text books quote Mr. J. L. Low's very

apt and graphic illustration : namely, that during the follow-through the right hand, which is held more over the club than with other shots, should turn over in the manner of a man who is turning a key in a lock. This is undoubtedly one of the main secrets of the shot ; but the beginner is liable to lay too much stress upon it, to get it into his head that that is the one and only thing that really matters.

The main thing is to hit the ball accurately, to time it with the precision that is required in any other stroke. The player can be too intent upon turning his right hand over, with the result that he will overdo it, or do it too soon. All he has to do is to see that he finishes with the toe of the club pointing upward, and he will then have obtained the amount of run he requires.

CHAPTER V

PUTTING

WE have said that the golf swing is the same in principle for every stroke from the full drive to the short putt ; that is to say, the ultimate object to be achieved is to follow straight through the ball, so that the club-head, at the actual moment of impact, is following an imaginary straight line several inches in length of which the ball itself is the centre. The longer the shot, the longer this imaginary line. A very good way of making sure

that one is following through with one's drives is to stand four corks upright, at a distance of about four inches from each other, or even more, and swing the club in such a manner that all four corks are sent flying. If the player succeeds in doing this, he may be sure that he is neither cutting across the ball nor bringing the club-head round.

Putts of all lengths can be pulled or sliced in just the same manner as drives or iron shots; and that is the reason why so many holeable putts are missed. In other words, the follow-through, in a modified degree, is just as essential with a putt of a few inches as it is with any other stroke. The main principles still hold good; one has to keep one's eye on the ball, to keep one's body perfectly steady, and *follow through*.

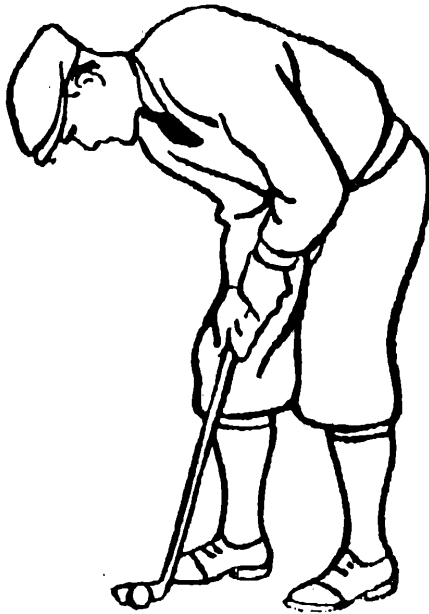
THE PUTT

With a great many first-class golfers, especially the Americans—who are admitted to excel in this department of the game—the putt is in very fact a swing in miniature. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Francis Ouimet. Cyril Tolley is, also, a very fine putter; he strikes the ball deliberately, takes the club back slowly, and follows through firmly and evenly.

This is undoubtedly the correct way to putt; but when we come to consider this particular feature of the game, we find ourselves confronted by obscurities and paradox. Indeed, it is the one stroke in the game where to be unorthodox does not

appear necessarily to ensure failure. If styles vary on the tee and through the green, they vary still more, and to a very much greater extent, when golfers are seen practising the art of putting.

Let us take one particular instance, to prove that putting has laws unto itself. No man will play golf successfully, if his hands are not touching. When gripping his club, his fingers need not neces-



PUTTING

sarily overlap ; but it is essential that the two hands should be close together, to ensure that they work in unison.

With the putt, this need not be so. It should be, and it is in the case of the majority of good players ; but the fact remains that several golfers can putt very well with their hands wide apart.

Putting is the simplest form of the game ; it is

the hardest ; and it is certainly the most important. This appears, at first sight, to be somewhat contradictory. It is obviously the simplest department of the game, because a child can often putt just as well as a practised player. It is certainly the hardest, because the golfer has not been born, and never will be born, who can putt to perfection. There are many players who with unfailing regularity hit nineteen out of twenty drives straight and far down the fairway ; but there never was a golfer who could hole every putt. It is an obvious fact that, if there were such a man, though he had but a moderate skill in the rest of the game, he would find his handicap at scratch.

IN THE MATTER OF STYLE

There is no golfer who has not tried all manner of putters, and all manner of putting stances. There are those who putt with their heels together, those who separate their legs as far as they can, those who stand upright, and those who crouch. Some people stab their putts, whilst others, more orthodox, maintain that the club should be swung pendulum-like. You may rest the right wrist slightly above the right knee, and there is no reason, for the matter of that, why you should not, if you want to, and you find that you can do it successfully, putt standing upon one leg, like a stork. This may seem a grossly exaggerated illustration ; but, none the less, there are golfers who are consistently good putters, who are to be seen in the

most ungraceful and uncomfortable attitudes on the greens.

On the other hand, the player who knows himself to be a bad putter cannot do better than adopt an orthodox and correct style. The ball must be struck truly on the greens ; and it is an indisputable fact that most golfers who generally succeed in doing this have an easy and graceful method of putting, as pleasant to watch as the results are satisfactory to themselves. Many of these adopt a particularly open stance when putting ; that is to say, the right foot is inclined to be almost behind the ball, whilst the left foot is several inches away from the line of the putt. This is almost a "two-eyed" stance, and must have certain advantages, as the club-head comes more naturally through in a straight line, whilst the player is particularly steady on his feet.

There are players who putt with their arms, and in principle this is altogether wrong. The art of putting should be left almost entirely to the wrists, both working in unison, the left wrist being mainly responsible for the short backward swing and the right wrist for the stroke itself.

In spite of all this doctrine and theory, there can be no question that putting is largely a matter of inspiration. Every golfer has his days on and his days off with this particular club more than with any other. There are days, for example, when every holeable ball goes down ; others, when the ball simply refuses to drop into the hole. You can

scarcely ever enter a golf club-house without hearing a player complain that he was playing exceptionally well, but that he had absolutely no luck with his putts. They were going all round the hole, but would not go in.

Only on rare occasions is this actually bad luck. The fault is nearly always the golfer's own. If the ball is struck truly, and with the necessary strength, ninety-nine times out of a hundred it will come to rest at the bottom of the tin.

What is called "inspiration" in putting is nothing more or less than a combination of confidence and care. Now, it happens to be particularly difficult to combine these two faculties; and that is one of the main difficulties with putting. The man who is putting must always be conscious of the simplicity, as well as the difficulty, of what he is doing. The former will give him the necessary confidence; the latter will make him exercise the necessary caution.

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

And here imagination can be of the greatest value. When the player strikes the ball on the putting green, he must look at it, but, before concentrating his attention upon the ball itself, he has first looked at the hole, in order to make sure of the correct line. Now there is such a thing as mental vision; and with this mental vision the player can still see the hole—in the sense that he knows exactly where it is—though he is not actually looking at it. If he

has this faculty, he will find it of inestimable value to him. Visualise the hole, whilst you are keeping your eyes riveted on the ball itself, in order to make sure that the putt is struck firmly and truly.

It is not a bad thing, on important occasions, for the golfer to carry two putters. There are many players who have a light putter for short putts, and a heavier putter for long ones. So fickle is this club that it will then sometimes be found that there will be days when the light putter insists upon undertaking the work of the other, and *vice versa*.

If a player has lost all confidence in his putting, it is not at all a bad thing for him to lend his putter for a few minutes to a small child. And let him observe that child knocking the ball into the hole without the slightest hesitation, nine times out of ten. He will be struck by the amazing circumstance that he himself has so often missed putts of that length; and the object lesson will have a salutary effect upon him. His personal pride will be touched. What that child can do, he, too, can do; and the next day he goes forth upon the links—and does it.

With putting more than with any other stroke, it is fatal to be pessimistic. The whole business is mental, as we have said; and auto-suggestion of the wrong kind can be fatal. Let us suppose a golfer finds himself two down and five to play in an important match and he is confronted by a yard putt for a half. On no account whatever should he suggest to himself the possibility of missing it—

and the result, if he does. If he considers for a moment that, if he misses that putt, he is three down and four to play, he has as good as missed it already, and lost the match. Let him never think of the state of the match. Golf matches are partly won by concentrating on each individual stroke ; which means that the player is producing the best golf he has in him.

CHAPTER VI

BUNKER SHOTS ; PULLING AND SLICING

THERE never yet was a golfer who did not on occasions find himself in difficulties. The shots of even the first-class player on comparatively rare occasions go astray, and he finds himself in a bunker, whereas the average golfer can scarcely hope to accomplish a round without getting into difficulties at more holes than one.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of bunker shots, both accomplished with the niblick : the explosion shot, and the chip. If the ball is lying clear on fairly firm sand, in a bunker on the edge of the green, it can be picked out cleanly with the lofted face of the niblick, and laid somewhere near the pin. Here again it goes without saying, the player must look at the ball, and he must play the shot firmly and without hesitation.

The explosion shot is more or less a matter of

brute strength. The club-head is simply driven straight down into the sand underneath and behind the ball, which is not itself struck with the face of the club. The loose sand is "exploded" upward after the manner of a miniature land-mine, and the ball naturally goes with it, and never far. It is always the safest shot to attempt; and in a really bad place the only alternative. Unless he is particularly unfortunate, a player can usually be certain of getting out of the bunker by this method; and after all, when the golfer finds himself bunkered, his primary objective ought to be to make certain of recovering.

To attempt too much often results in the player being worse off than before. From shallow bunkers, especially when the ball is lying clear, there are occasions—such as frequently occur in match play—when the competitor has to get a certain amount of distance. To make a long shot out of a bunker, it is certainly advisable to cut somewhat across the ball, in order to lift it rapidly. The shot is by no means difficult, and is very often best accomplished when the player does not go in for a lot of elaborate preparations. It is most essential that he make sure that he has both a firm foothold and the stance he wants; but, as he cannot ground his club, he may find that it will pay him to address the ball only once, and then play the stroke more rapidly than is his usual custom. This is not offered as definite advice, but merely as a suggestion that may, to some, prove useful.

ON SAND, ROUGH GRASS AND SHINGLE

There are occasions on wet sand when it is exceedingly hard to estimate how far the ball is going to come out of a bunker. As a rule, it comes out much too far. A good shot to practise for these occasions is the ordinary mashie shot played with a niblick, but executed in exactly the same way. However, the player must be particularly careful to cut under the ball—that is to say, to strike the ball before the sole of his club touches the sand. This applies to all hazards when there is loose or blown sand. If the club-head strikes the sand before the ball, the stroke will be fluffed.

In coarse, rough grass, as we have said, iron clubs are invariably a danger. With a niblick a player should be certain of getting back on the fairway; and that is the safest shot to play, unless he understands the art of using a heavy spoon on these occasions. With a spoon there is no danger of socketing, and the big, weighted club-head cannot cut underneath the ball in the same manner as the iron. It should be brought down behind the ball with a certain amount of strength and wrist work; and the ball is stabbed out, so to speak, to be sent upon its way considerably further than could have been accomplished with a niblick.

There are certain courses, especially at the seaside, where there are to be found loose stones or shingle. This means ruination to the golfer's clubs. If dents are always being filed out of one's irons, those

clubs are continually getting lighter and lighter, as well as assuming a battered and uncared-for appearance. Also, it should be remembered that dents in the angle formed by the sole and the face of an iron club play havoc with rubber-core golf balls, at two shillings each. For these reasons the player who has occasionally to play off shingle should carry in his bag a special club for this purpose. A suitable club would be a light niblick, which he might also use for such other purposes as he fancies.

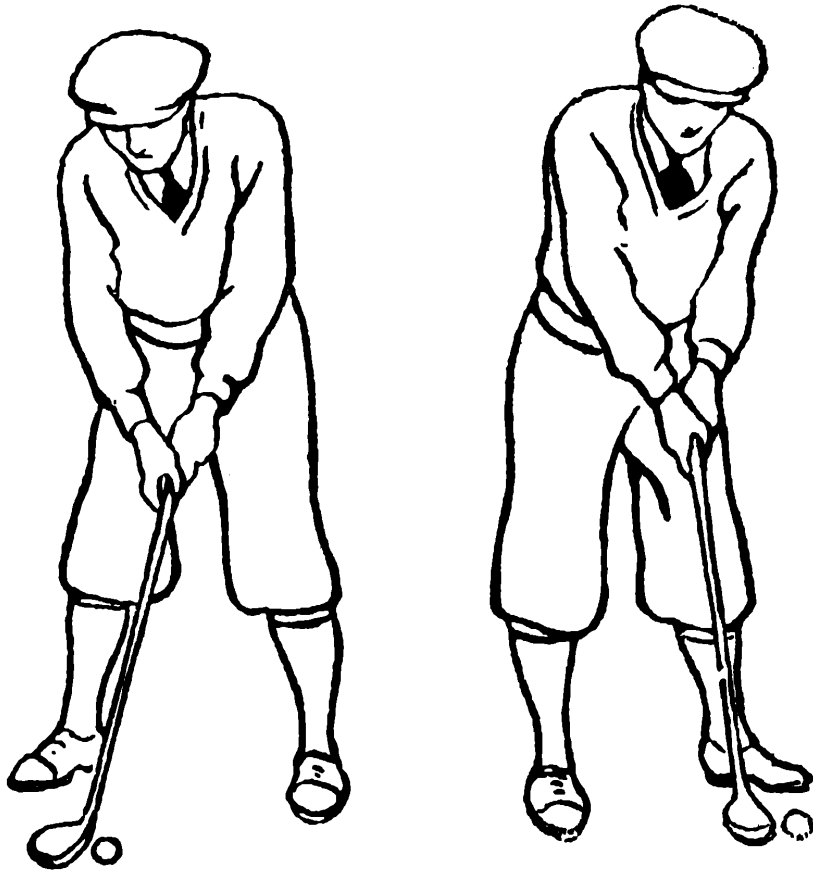
PULLING AND SLICING

The more advanced shots in golf—such as the cut-shot with the mashie, the so-called “push shot,” and the intentional slice or pull—are not for the average player. There are occasions, however, when necessity demands that he must attempt a pull or a slice, as the case may be, since there is some object, like a building or a tree, in the direct line of his play to the hole. The low-handicap player can usually slice when he wants to; the trouble with him is that he cannot regulate his slice to anything like the same extent as a first-class professional. To pull at will is very much harder; and even the best of players are apt to overdo it.

When playing long shots through the green, it is advisable to remember that, if the player is standing with his feet higher than the ball, he is apt to slice; whereas if his feet are lower than the ball, he must expect a pull. In the latter case, a good tip is to

shorten the club a little—the mere fraction of an inch will make all the difference.

Every player on every course is occasionally confronted by what is called a “hanging lie,” when the ball rests upon a downward slope. James Braid’s tip for this is extremely valuable. He



STANCE FOR A PULL

STANCE FOR A SLICE

declares that he attempts to make the stroke in such a way that the club-head follows the downward angle of the gradient, brushing the grass before and in front of the ball. In attempting to do this, the player must be careful that he does not try to achieve his object by means of a sudden drop of his left

shoulder. That will unquestionably have the effect of a bad slice. If Braid himself actually does lower his left shoulder during the stroke—and it is more than probable that he does—he does so gradually and with an even movement which is part of the rhythm of the swing.

On the other hand, it should be obvious that the player who has an upward stance should take a straighter faced club for the shot than he would otherwise do. If the ball rests, for instance, upon the steep grassy slope of a hummock or mound, the player will achieve nothing if he uses a niblick. It is best in these positions to take the straightest faced iron club the player has in his bag and play a half shot with it. That will have the effect of sending the ball an appreciable distance down the fairway ; which is as much as can be expected.

CHAPTER VII

COMPETITIONS ; MATCH AND MEDAL PLAY

IN regard to the merits of the various ways in which matches or competitions may be played, there is a difference of opinion between golfers of all grades. There are many who prefer match play, singles or foursomes, who declare that they consider the card and pencil business a cold-blooded, impersonal form of the game in which the player becomes a mere arithmetical machine.

On the other hand, it is maintained by others

that medal, or score, play—especially over thirty-six holes—is the best test of golf, the surest criterion of the player's actual form.

The third type of competition—namely, singles or foursomes *versus* bogey—is in a way a hybrid form of the game that has few advantages beyond being convenient for a number of players. When club members of all handicaps are competing, each against all, a competition against bogey does not hold up a crowded course to anything like the same extent as a medal round. A player who has a generous handicap and who is running up a big aggregate score, being obliged to hole out on every green, obviously takes a long time to complete the round, and will possibly delay the couples who are following. A bogey competition is a hybrid form of golf, because it is neither match nor medal play, but a kind of apology for both. It has not the human excitement, the dramatic ups and downs, of a match against a living, and hence fallible, opponent; whilst at the same time it does not demand the precision, judgment and equable temperament of the game when the player is obliged to register his total score.

BOGEY COMPETITIONS

But that is not to say that bogey competitions are not exceedingly popular amongst golfers; and there is a very good reason why they should be so. To the ordinary player—who takes his golf as a recreation at the conclusion of the week—the

medal round is not only an arduous and trying affair, but all interest in the result is very apt to vanish quite early in the game, since a competitor may have ruined his card and his chances of winning after the first two or three holes.

In the bogey competition one plays, as it were, a match against an imaginary opponent, who can be defeated at any particular hole only by a display of brilliancy, and against whom any serious blunder will invariably mean the loss of that hole. It has, however, a certain similarity to match play, inasmuch as the player is free to wash out from his memory any particularly serious disaster. Interest can usually be maintained to the very end, the competitor striving to the last green to be no more down to bogey than he need.

MATCH AND MEDAL PLAY

For all that, the two standard forms of the game are undoubtedly match and medal play, and the professionals are almost unanimously agreed that the latter is the best test for a championship. It is quite true that the ordinary club professional plays one or two matches almost every day of his life; but they are usually matches in which he is giving a great number of strokes, for which he is paid in any case, whether he wins or loses, and in which his reputation is not in the slightest degree at stake, so that he is not in any way disgraced if he happens to lose. Games of this sort are not, after all, very much practice for the professional who may

have to come up against a formidable rival in one of the few important knockout competitions. His temperament is then put to the test in quite another way.

For the ideal temperaments of match and medal play are in many respects essentially different. It is not easy to analyse exactly wherein this difference lies. There are many fine golfers who are almost equally good at both ; but even these have a slight preference, as a rule, for one particular form of the game. With amateurs, especially those who are indifferent players, among the lower handicap men there will be found a minority of good score players ; whereas those with long handicaps are usually at a disadvantage when playing a match. This is not in the least a matter of character ; it is merely a question of figures. But the fact remains that of two players of equal merit, the one may be essentially a match player and the other a medal player. It is mainly a question of a certain mental attitude towards the game itself.

THE IDEAL MEDAL PLAYER

The ideal medal player is usually the more deliberate in his methods. He must be a golfer of even temperament, about whose play there is a certain steadiness and reliability. The match player can afford to be more brilliant and less reliable. Far from being disastrous, a bad shot in a match may sometimes prove to the player's advantage ; for if he saves the situation in an unexpected and astonishing manner the very fact that he has done so may

serve to shake his opponent's confidence. On the other hand, if he does not recover, he does no more than lose that individual hole ; whilst in medal play such an occurrence might mean the ruination of his whole card.

There are many good medal players who maintain that the secret of their success is that they play to a schedule, pre-arranged and pre-calculated. This kind of golfer estimates beforehand what he thinks he ought to take to every hole, and he endeavours to play each hole, stroke by stroke, in the way that he has planned. This is probably quite a sound system ; but, if the player decides to adopt it, he should not fall into the habit of constantly reminding himself that he is so many strokes above or below his schedule, as the case may be. If he does so, in the former case, he is apt to become careless, subconsciously having the impression that he has so many strokes in hand ; whereas in the latter case, in endeavouring to recapture the strokes he has lost, he may come wholly to grief.

In medal play especially, every hole should be played for itself, though the maxim that holds good in all forms of the game is for the golfer to play each individual stroke as if that was the only thing that mattered—to do the best he can, and not to attempt to do more than he ought to know he can do.

When the player has his total score to consider, safety play is undoubtedly wise. It is well to remember that it is always the golfer who makes the least number of mistakes who wins. Difficult

as it may be to men of a certain temperament one must not be depressed because of some misfortune or stroke of bad luck. It is equally hard at times not to get over-elated—and this can be just as fatal. Success can be as disastrous as failure. The player who has begun a round with what is called a “flying start,” who has accomplished three or four holes in figures well under his normal form, is tempted to run away with the idea that he is going the whole eighteen holes with the same combination of skill and good-fortune; and in attempting to prolong what is nothing more or less than a patch of brilliancy, he invariably comes to grief, sometimes actually losing at one hole all the strokes he has gained at the others.

On the other hand, one can certainly be too careful in score play. Indeed, this form of the game calls for the utmost judgment, as well as steadiness; and it is for that reason that it ranks as high as it does as a true test of the game.

MATCH PLAY

Match play has the great advantage of introducing a more human element into the game. Stroke by stroke, hole by hole, the two players compete in a battle royal, the play of the one influencing in no small degree that of the other; for there is no golfer who can be absolutely impervious to the performance of his opponent.

The match player should always remember—especially in an eighteen hole contest—that the game

begins at the very first hole. To become one up on the first green is obviously an advantage. There are certain players who believe that they always require two or three holes to get into their stride, so to speak, to warm their blood and get the true fighting spirit. That may be so ; but that is no reason why they should make a point of being two or three down at the end of the first few holes. It is equally true that the average player is very often at his best when he is one or two down—though not more. Golf, however, is a game in which the element of chance plays a very big part ; and luck may very likely turn against a golfer when he is down—which makes his chances of ultimate recovery all the harder.

The ideal match player should be merciless. We all know that a game of golf is never won until it is actually lost. The player should battle with all his might, hole by hole, from the first tee to the last green. Even when he is six up on his opponent, he must fight as hard as ever to deliver the knock-out blow ; he must drive home his victory, like a boxer in the ring, with all his strength and will-power.

When considering the psychology of the game of golf, one is constantly confronted by paradox and anomaly. So far as mental attitude is concerned, the ideal golfer is continually being asked to do two entirely different things at one and the same time. In match play this is again the case. One must observe one's opponent's play ; but, at the same time, one must only on occasions allow it to affect one's own game.

For instance, when your opponent has played two more, nobody but a fool would attempt anything but a safety shot. It is well to remember, however, that that safety shot must be played with the utmost care. Anything in the way of carelessness may result in only a half, or even the loss of the hole. But, when the boot is on the other foot, when one's opponent has the advantage of those two strokes, there is often no alternative but to go out for the big thing. It is on such occasions that the player is sometimes justified in taking a brassie out of a bunker, or in an attempt to carry a hazard that is normally out of his reach. Only by some such method can the hole sometimes be saved—and often it is saved in the most surprising manner.

Recoveries through the green, or the dramatic holing of long and important putts at critical moments, must inevitably have a detrimental effect on the play of one's adversary. We are all human, and golf is essentially a human game, a game of character and temperament, as well as skill. At the same time, we should strive to be affected by these episodes as little as possible. It is in that respect that the golfer must play his own game, in spite of the performance of his opponent.

CHAPTER VIII

PLAYING THE GAME

IN conclusion, it may be said that all games have for long been regarded as a kind of preparation for

life. As well as keeping us physically fit, they afford us no small amount of moral benefit. As well as the proper use of our muscles and sinews, they teach us judgment, patience, forbearance, and many other virtues, the majority of which are embraced in the meaning of that one word "sportsmanship."

Especially is this true of golf, the game above all others that requires continual thought. That golf is a selfish game for the niggard and the Shylock who wants his pound of flesh, is not by any means the case. It is a game that, if played in the true spirit, calls forth the best qualities of a sportsman.

It should teach us how to suffer, like men, "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." It should teach us mental concentration, determination and resolution, that control of our nerves in an emergency which may be called mental balance, and how to stick to our guns.

Unfortunately, not everyone who plays the game in these days, when it has become so popular that there are golf courses wherever one goes, is worthy to be called a "golfer" in the inward and spiritual meaning of the word. A young man, who has a good eye for games, may learn to play golf tolerably well in a comparatively short time; but it will take him considerably longer to understand and to appreciate the spirit and traditions of golf.

Strict adherence to the rules, as well as observance of the usual etiquette, is not the only thing that is necessary. There is a kind of mystery in the game that is appreciated only by the experienced and

wise. He need not necessarily be a specially good player ; but the knowledge he possesses is worth more to him than several strokes, both in the matter of winning his matches, and in the personal enjoyment he is able to get on the links.

For this reason the young golfer cannot do better than play as often as he can with some older player who thoroughly understands the finer points of the game. Because a man has a low handicap, it does not necessarily follow that he is a golfer in this sense.

THE PROFESSIONAL

Fortunately for the beginner, who has to learn the spirit of the game as well as the art of it, the whole body of British professionals, with very few exceptions, set a magnificent example to the members of the clubs to which they are attached. It must be remembered that they have invariably been brought up in the game, bred and born in it ; they have learned golf in its every phase since childhood, and appreciate its traditions.

It is seldom that the two hours or so spent in going round a golf course with a professional is anything but profitable. As a rule the professional is only too willing to talk whilst he is playing ; and—unless it is a match upon which a great deal depends and much concentration is necessary—the player is advised to encourage his opponent to discuss the world in general and the game of golf in particular, as they are walking after their shots

The professional—especially those who have made a great success of the game—has thought about golf a great deal more than the ordinary amateur. He has also had far more experience. He seldom finds himself in a situation that has never, at some time or other, occurred to him before. And this experience may be as valuable to the amateur—whose golfing career is apt to be spasmodic—as actual instruction in the art of playing the strokes.

KEEP YOUR TEMPER

Though one or two may declare to the contrary, golf is not a game that can be seen at its best when the player is boiling with rage, indignation, or disgust at himself. Indeed, there is only one shot in the whole range of the game where it actually is of advantage to lose one's temper. That is the explosion shot out of a bunker. The more savagely and viciously the sole of the niblick is driven deep into the sand, the more certain is the ball to jump clear of trouble. Let the reader, the next time he finds himself called upon to play this particular stroke, imagine himself to be furious, whether he is or not ; and then let him judge by results.

The emotions figure enough in the game as it is, without letting them run away with us more than we can help. It is a game of infinite variety and delight that, though the golfer may have played it for a lifetime, is always new. There is more comradeship in it than in any other game, and there

should be, also, good will, generosity and kindliness. Apart from the fact that it takes us out into the fresh air, often with the breath of the sea in our nostrils, it has a power of exhilaration that is all its own. And when we are on whatever game is ours, and things go well with us, and we feel ourselves to be invincible, though we are in truth but building castles in the air, we go upon our way upon the links, rejoicing; and we should be thankful to that sly old rascal, who was James the First of England, and the Sixth of Scotland, who brought the Royal and Ancient Game into England from over the Tweed.

GOLF ETIQUETTE

1.—When your opponent or partner is playing a shot, neither move nor speak.

2.—Do not stand immediately behind a player. On the putting green do not stand on the line of the putt either in front of or behind a player. Do not tread on the line of your opponent's putt. If you have to cross it on the green, either step over it or walk round it.

3.—On the tee do not tee your ball until it is your turn to drive. Always wait until the player furthest from the hole has played, before walking on.

4.—Move straight off the green as soon as your match has holed out. Do not try again the putt you have missed, when other players are waiting behind you.

5.—Never play into a match ahead, unless you have the right to go through and have signalled to them that you intend to do so.

6.—If there is a clear hole ahead of you, you must not hold up the course, if the match following you is kept waiting. In such case, or if you have lost a ball, those behind you have the right to go on. Signal them on by waving a club above your head, whilst they should acknowledge the signal by lifting a club in reply.

7.—When you have let a match through, do not resume play until they are out of range. Such conduct is unpardonable.

8.—REPLACE ALL DIVOTS. And tread them well into the ground, or see that your caddy does so.

9.—When your caddy holds the flag, see that he stands well away from the hole. Heel marks on the rim of the cup are unfair.

10.—A solitary player has no standing on the course.

11.—If the round is a slow one, do not abuse without justification the unfortunate players who happen to be immediately in front of you. Use your eyes, when it may be apparent to you that they, too, are held up, that a match some distance in front is responsible for the delay. A match has lost its place on the course when there is a whole clear hole in front of it.

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